

# **BARBADOS 2012 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Barbados is a multiparty, parliamentary democracy. In 2008 national elections, voters elected Prime Minister David Thompson of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). International observers assessed the vote as generally free and fair. Prime Minister Thompson died in office in October 2010 and was replaced by Deputy Prime Minister Freundel Stuart. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most serious human rights problem was the occasional use of excessive force by the police.

Other human rights problems included societal violence against women and children, child abuse, and discrimination against gay men and lesbians.

The government took steps to punish officials who committed abuses, and there was not a widespread perception of impunity for security force members.

### **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:**

#### **a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life**

The government or its agents did not commit any politically motivated killings, but on rare occasions, there were police killings in the line of duty. Authorities investigated all such killings and referred them to a coroner's inquiry when appropriate. Delays in receiving case files from the police often impeded timely completion of such inquiries.

On April 3, police officers shot and killed Jamar Andre Maynard while he and an accomplice were attempting to rob a woman. One of the two suspects drew a firearm, and the police fired on the suspects. Authorities sent the case to a coroner's inquiry, and the officers involved in the incident remained on active duty. In the December 2011 death in police custody of Curtis Callender, an autopsy carried out in the presence of family members and their legal representative provided no evidence to suggest police misconduct.

In September the director of public prosecutions charged three Coast Guard officers--Corey Broome, Romerio Gasin, and Shem Chapman--with manslaughter in connection with the 2010 killing of Percival Louie. Authorities originally

treated the case as an unnatural death, which caused a two-and-a-half-year delay in charging the officers. Their trial date was set for January 29, 2013.

Frequently there were long delays in receiving case files from the police and completing coroner's inquiries related to police killings. A coroner's inquiry into the death of Michael Davis (killed by police in 2007) concluded in October. The inquest found that police fatally shot Davis in the line of duty while they were executing a search warrant. In July the coroner's office received case files from the police to begin inquests into the deaths of Denzil Headley (killed by police in 2009) and Sean Anderson Sealy (killed by police in July 2011). Both inquests began on October 19 and concluded on December 18. The coroner determined that both killings occurred in the line of duty.

## **b. Disappearance**

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

## **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The constitution prohibits such practices, but there were complaints against the police alleging unprofessional conduct, intimidation, and beating or assault. Police occasionally were accused of beating suspects to obtain confessions, and suspects often recanted their confessions during their trial. In many cases the only evidence against the accused was a confession. Suspects and their family members continued to allege coercion by police, but there was no evidence of systematic police abuse. Anecdotal reports indicated that crime often went unreported and that police officers pressured victims not to formally report crimes. There were also reports that some witnesses refused to testify in court against police officers.

In December two on-duty police officers offered four foreign women a ride back to their home in a police vehicle. The women alleged that the officers were drinking while on duty and demanded either sex or monetary payment from the women once they had accepted the transportation. The police officers sexually assaulted the women and stole property before departing their home. Authorities charged the officers with indecent assault, burglary, criminal damage, and willful misconduct. Authorities released them on bail with a hearing set for February 2013.

In the February 2011 rape of a Jamaican national detained at the Central Police Station on drug trafficking charges, authorities charged Constable Jonathan Barrow

with serious indecency and Constable Melanie Denny with aiding and abetting an offense of serious indecency. Authorities suspended both from the force and set their next hearing for January 2013.

A Jamaican national, Shanique Myrie, brought suit against the government in the Caribbean Court of Justice claiming that she was sexually assaulted by a female immigration officer who detained her upon arrival at the airport. The case was pending at year's end.

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

Prison and detention center conditions generally met international standards.

Physical Conditions: Dodds Prison, built in 2007 in St. Philip, was designed to meet modern international standards with a capacity of approximately 1,250 prisoners. According to prison officials, on December 12, it held 1,054 sentenced prisoners. Although prisoners occasionally complained about the quality of the food, Dodds had a canteen program permitting family members to make deposits into inmate accounts, and inmates could purchase food, toiletries, and dry goods.

On October 31, there were 39 female prisoners held in a separate wing. There were separate juvenile facilities for boys and girls.

On September 3, a Jamaican national, Dishawn Campbell, died in prison, and the Jamaican government asked for a report on his death. A prison postmortem examination found that he died of pneumonia, secondary to an immune-compromised state.

Administration: Prison record keeping was adequate, and there were alternative sentencing measures for nonviolent offenders. Authorities permitted reasonable access to visitors, although there were reports that police obstructed some lawyers from visiting their clients in detention. Prisoners were permitted religious observance. Prisoners may submit complaints to the officer in charge. If that officer cannot resolve the problem, it is referred to the warden. There was no specific ombudsman, but prisoners could submit complaints to judicial authorities.

Authorities transferred Raul Garcia, a Cuban prisoner, from prison to a nonpunitive facility after he went on a hunger strike in February. He completed his 15-year sentence for drug trafficking in 2010. Authorities stated they continued to hold Garcia because the Cuban government denied his repatriation request and that he

would remain in the nonpunitive facility until Cuba or another country agreed to accept him. There were no immediate plans to release the prisoner into general society.

Monitoring: The government allowed prison visits by independent human rights monitors.

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

In 2011 police arrested and detained Derick Crawford for the rapes of two female British visitors that took place in October 2010. Authorities held Crawford in prison for 18 months. In November the two rape survivors traveled to Barbados to testify on Crawford's behalf after they repeatedly told police that Crawford was not the man who had raped them and the police ignored their statements. The women said they did not want to see an innocent man convicted, and the magistrate eventually dropped the charges against Crawford. The police commissioner refused to meet with the rape survivors to discuss the handling of their cases. The women called for a full inquiry into the police investigation and for the police to find the actual perpetrator.

#### **Role of the Police and Security Apparatus**

The Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF) is responsible for internal law enforcement. The small Barbados Defense Force (BDF) protects national security and may be called upon to maintain public order in times of crisis, emergency, or other specific need. The RBPF reports to the minister of home affairs, and the BDF reports to the minister of defense and security. Although the police largely were unarmed, special RBPF foot patrols in high-crime areas carried firearms. An armed special rapid-response unit continued to operate. The law provides that the police can request BDF assistance with special joint patrols.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the RBPF and the BDF, and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption.

#### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention**

The law authorizes police to arrest persons suspected of criminal activity; a warrant is typically required. The constitution permits authorities to hold detainees without charge for up to five days; however, once persons are charged, police must bring them before a court without unnecessary delay. There is a functioning bail system. Criminal detainees received prompt access to counsel and were advised of that right immediately after arrest. Authorities generally permitted family members access to them.

Police procedures provide that, except when a senior divisional officer expressly permitted them to do otherwise, the police may question suspects and other persons only at a police station. An officer must visit detainees at least once every three hours to inquire about the detainees' condition. After 24 hours the detaining authority must submit a written report to the deputy commissioner. The authorities must approve and record all movements of detainees between stations.

Pretrial Detention: There were 441 persons in pretrial detention as of December 12. While length of pretrial detention may vary from one case to another, there were no reports of extended periods of pretrial detention or abuse of the practice.

#### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence in practice.

#### **Trial Procedures**

The constitution provides that persons charged with criminal offenses receive a fair public hearing without unnecessary delay by an independent, impartial court and a trial by jury. The government generally respected these rights in practice. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney of choice in a timely manner. The government provided free legal aid to the indigent in family matters, child support, serious criminal cases such as rape or murder, and all cases involving minors. The law permits defendants to confront and question witnesses and present evidence on their own behalf. Defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their case. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty, have the right of appeal, and cannot be compelled to testify or confess guilt.

The constitution and law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

## **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

## **Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies**

Magistrate's courts have both civil and criminal jurisdiction, but the civil judicial system experienced heavy backlogs. Citizens can seek redress for human rights or other abuses through the civil system.

### **f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence**

The constitution prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice.

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:**

### **a. Freedom of Speech and Press**

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to ensure freedom of speech and press.

The government restricted the receipt and importation of foreign publications deemed to be pornographic.

### **Internet Freedom**

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or credible reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms without judicial oversight. According to the International Telecommunication Union, 55 percent of households had Internet access and 72 percent of citizens used the Internet in 2011.

### **Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

### **b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at [www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt/](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt/).

### **d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons**

The constitution and the law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

The government was prepared to cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern.

### **Protection of Refugees**

Access to Asylum: The government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. The government did not grant refugee status or asylum during the year.

## **Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government**

The constitution provides citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

### **Elections and Political Participation**

Recent Elections: In general elections held in 2008, the DLP, in opposition since 1994, defeated the Barbados Labour Party, led by then prime minister Owen Arthur. The DLP won 20 of the 30 seats in the parliament's House of Assembly, and DLP leader David Thompson became prime minister. Following Thompson's death in October 2010, the DLP parliamentary group selected Deputy Prime

Minister Freundel Stuart to be prime minister. The government called the next general election for February 2013.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Three cabinet members were women, and there were four women in the House of Assembly. There were five women and four members of minority groups in the 21-member appointed Senate.

#### **Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government**

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively.

There is no law that subjects public officials to financial disclosure. Parliament's Public Accounts Committee and the auditor general conduct investigations of all government public accounts, which include ministries, departments, and statutory bodies.

There is no law providing citizens access to information held by the government. While government Web sites provide access to information, responses to requests for specific government information by citizens and other interested parties often were slow.

#### **Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights**

A number of domestic human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The Ombudsman's Office hears complaints against government offices for alleged injuries or injustices resulting from administrative conduct. The governor general appoints the ombudsman on the recommendation of the prime minister in consultation with the leader of the opposition; Parliament must approve the appointment. The ombudsman submits annual reports to Parliament, which contain both recommendations on changes to laws and descriptions of actions taken by the Ombudsman's Office.

#### **Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons**



The constitution provides for equal treatment regardless of race, origin, political opinion, color, creed, or sex, and the government effectively enforced these provisions.

## Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, and the maximum penalty is life imprisonment. There were legal protections against spousal rape for women holding a court-issued divorce decree, separation order, or nonmolestation order. Rape was underreported for fear of further violence, retribution, and societal stigma. In addition, sources reported that victims were sometimes reluctant to report crimes to police because of their perceived ineffectiveness. Authorities charged 99 persons with sex-related offenses during the year, compared with 145 in 2011. Authorities brought charges in 56 cases of rape, compared with 55 in 2011; three cases of sex with a minor, compared with 11 in 2011; and 38 cases of indecent assault, compared with 53 in 2011. Many cases remained pending in the courts for months or years.

Violence and abuse against women continued to be significant social problems. The law prohibits domestic violence, provides protection to all members of the family, including men and children, and applies equally to marriages and to common-law relationships. Penalties depend on the severity of the charges and range from a fine for first-time offenders (unless the injury is serious) up to the death penalty for a killing. Victims may request restraining orders, which the courts often issued. The courts can sentence an offender to jail for breaching such an order. The police have a victim support unit, consisting of civilian volunteers, which offered assistance primarily to female victims of violent crimes but reports indicated that services provided were inadequate. Victims reporting a sexual assault were subject to lengthy waiting procedures at the police station and for examinations at the hospital staffed primarily by male doctors. There were also reports that police did not respond promptly or adequately to complaints of sexual assault.

There were public and private counseling services for victims of domestic violence, rape, and child abuse. There were programs to sensitize clergy who counsel abuse victims, to encourage hairdressers to identify domestic violence and direct women to seek expert assistance, to offer domestic violence awareness training for high school students, and to prevent elder abuse for workers in geriatric hospitals. The Ministry of Family implemented a Partnership for Peace program that targets perpetrators of domestic abuse. The nongovernmental

organization (NGO) Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW) operated a crisis center staffed by trained counselors and provided legal and medical referral services. The government provided some funding for a shelter for battered women, also operated by the BPW, which accommodated up to 25 women plus their children. The shelter offered the services of trained psychological counselors to victims of domestic violence.

The Bureau of Gender Affairs cited a lack of specific information and inadequate mechanisms for collecting and evaluating data on incidents of domestic violence as major impediments to tackling gender-based violence.

Sexual Harassment: The law does not specifically address sexual harassment, which was a problem. There were no statistics available on the prevalence of sexual harassment cases. Media reports often indicated that women avoided reporting sexual harassment because they feared retribution in the workplace.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals had the right to decide the number, spacing, and timing of children, and had the information and means to do so free from discrimination. Skilled attendance at delivery and in postpartum care was widely available, as was access to information on contraception.

Discrimination: The Bureau of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Family, Culture, Sports, and Youth worked to ensure the rights of women. Women have equal property rights, including in a divorce settlement. Women actively participated in all aspects of national life and were well represented at all levels of the public and private sectors, although some discrimination persisted. Reports indicated that women frequently earned significantly less than men for comparable work.

## **Children**

Birth Registration: Citizenship is obtained by birth in the country and/or from one's parents. There was universal birth registration.

Child Abuse: Violence and abuse against children remained serious problems. The Child Care Board has a mandate for the care and protection of children, which involved investigating daycare centers and cases of child abuse or child labor and providing counseling services, residential placement, and foster care. The Welfare Department offered counseling on a broad range of family-related issues, and the Child Care Board conducted counseling for child abuse victims. The board vocally advocated stricter regulations to protect children.

Child Marriage: The legal minimum age for marriage is 18. The rate of underage marriage was extremely low, probably less than 1 percent.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The government does not have a policy framework to combat the sexual exploitation of children. The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. The Ministry of Family, Culture, Sports, and Youth acknowledged that child prostitution occurred; however, there was no research to document that problem. Pornography is illegal, but no information was available concerning specific prohibitions dealing with child pornography.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For country-specific information see the Department of State's report at [www.travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country\\_3781.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_3781.html).

## **Anti-Semitism**

The Jewish community was very small. The head of the Barbados Worker's Union publicly referred to a local employer as an "Egyptian Jew." After the media publicized his comments, the union leader said no apology was required and that none would be made. This comment came after reports that the employer paid local workers less than foreign workers in a jewelry store. There were no other reports of anti-Semitism.

## **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip](http://www.state.gov/j/tip).

## **Persons with Disabilities**

No laws specifically prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, or the provision of other state services, other than constitutional provisions asserting equality for all. In practice persons with disabilities faced some discrimination. The Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, and Community Development operated a Disabilities Unit to address the concerns of persons with disabilities, but parents complained of added fees and transport difficulties for children with disabilities at public schools. Although persons with disabilities continued to face social stigma preventing them

from fully participating in society, attitudes were slowly evolving. Persons with disabilities generally experienced hiring discrimination as well as difficulty in achieving economic independence.

The Barbados Council for the Disabled, the Barbados National Organization for the Disabled, and other NGOs indicated that access and transportation remained the primary challenges facing persons with disabilities. Many public areas lacked the necessary ramps, railings, parking, and bathroom adjustments to accommodate such persons, and affordable, reliable transportation for them remained elusive. However, some measures addressed transportation concerns through private transportation providers and NGOs advocating rights for persons with disabilities.

While no legislation mandates provision of accessibility to public thoroughfares or public or private buildings, the Town and Country Planning Department set provisions for all public buildings to include accessibility to persons with disabilities. As a result most new buildings had ramps, reserved parking, and special sanitary facilities for such persons. The Barbados Council for the Disabled and other NGOs promoted and implemented sensitization and accessibility programs designed to improve inclusion and services for persons with disabilities.

The Disabilities Unit continued numerous programs for persons with disabilities, including Call-a-Ride and Dial-a-Ride public transportation programs, sensitization workshops for public transportation operators, inspections of public transportation vehicles, sign language education programs, integrated summer camps, and accessibility programs.

### **Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults, and no laws prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation in employment, housing, education, or health care. A recent study of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians among university students from the University of the West Indies found that stigma against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) persons continued to exist. While the overall findings of the study revealed moderately negative attitudes, participants demonstrated a broad range of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

Anecdotal evidence suggested LGBT persons faced discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education and health care. LGBT persons were reluctant to

report incidents of violence or abuse out of fear of retribution or reprisal due to their sexual orientation. Although statistics were unavailable, anecdotal evidence suggested that while many individuals lived open LGBT lifestyles, societal discrimination against gay men and lesbians occurred. Responding to a call by United Kingdom Prime Minister Cameron for reform of anti-LGBT legislation, Attorney General Brathwaite declared the country's "position on homosexuality was not for sale" and that its legislative agenda would be determined at home.

### **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

The government continued a large countrywide media campaign to discourage discrimination against HIV/AIDS-infected persons and others living with them. While there was no systematic discrimination, HIV/AIDS-infected persons did not commonly disclose the condition due to lack of social acceptance.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law, including related regulations and statutes, recognizes the right of workers to form and join unions and conduct legal strikes but does not specifically recognize the right to bargain collectively. Moreover, the law does not obligate companies to recognize unions or to accept collective bargaining, and no specific law prohibits antiunion discrimination. All private sector employees are permitted to strike, but the law prohibits workers in essential services, such as police, firefighters, electricity, and water company employees, from engaging in strikes. Labor laws cover all groups of workers, including migrants, public sector, domestic workers, and those in special trade zones, and the government generally enforced the laws effectively.

In general the government effectively enforced these laws in the formal sector. Although the courts provided a method of redress for employees alleging wrongful dismissal, they commonly awarded monetary compensation but rarely ordered reinstatement. This process was often subject to lengthy delays. A tripartite group of labor, management, and government representatives met monthly. The group dealt with social and economic issues as they arose, worked to formulate legislative policy, and played a significant role in setting and maintaining harmonious workplace relations. In recent years it has dealt with the closing of a major resort and employee layoffs from a large private-sector company.

Workers faced some challenges in exercising freedom of association or bargaining collectively; however, their rights were generally respected. Worker organizations were independent from government and political parties. Workers exercised the right to conduct legal strikes.

Although employers were under no legal obligation to recognize unions, most major employers did so when 50 percent plus one of the employees made a request. However, some unions noted that employers often refused to negotiate collective bargaining agreements with them, even if the company recognized the union. There were reports that some foreign companies refused to recognize unions. In these cases the Department of Labor tried to influence the company either to recognize the union or to relocate the business to another country. Smaller companies were often not unionized.

### **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

The constitution prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. The government generally enforced such laws in practice. The government initiated a public awareness campaign to provide information about human trafficking that included information about forced labor.

There were no official reports of forced labor occurring during the year. However, in the past foreigners reportedly were subjected to forced labor, including in domestic service, agriculture, and construction.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip](http://www.state.gov/j/tip).

### **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

The law provides for a minimum working age of 16 for certain sectors but does not cover sectors such as agriculture. The law prohibits children under the age of 18 from engaging in work likely to harm their health, safety, or morals, but it does not specifically note which occupations fall under this prohibition. The law prohibits the employment of children of compulsory school age (through age 16) during school hours. The law also prohibits young people from night work (after 6 p.m.). These laws were effectively enforced, and child labor laws were generally observed. Parents are culpable under the law if they have children under 16 who are not in school.

The Labor Department had a small cadre of labor inspectors who conducted spot investigations of enterprises and checked records to verify compliance with the law. These inspectors may take legal action against an employer found employing underage workers. Employers found guilty of violating statutes of the Employment Act may be fined or imprisoned for up to 12 months. According to the chief labor inspector, no underage employment cases were filed during the past few years.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at [www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/tda.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/tda.htm).

#### **d. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

The law provides for minimum wage rates for household domestics and shop assistants, which was BDS\$6.25 (\$3.13) per hour. The Ministry of Labor recommended companies in all other sectors use this as the de facto minimum wage. Negotiated protocols contained provisions for increases in basic wages and increases based on productivity. The sixth such protocol was scheduled to expire in 2013.

The standard legal workweek is 40 hours in five days, and the law provides employees with three weeks of paid holiday for the first four years of service and four weeks' holiday after five years of service. An employee's length of service is linked to the anniversary of the commencement date with current employer. The law requires overtime payment of time and a half for hours worked in excess and prescribes that all overtime must be voluntary.

The Occupational Safety and Health at Work Act, passed in 2005, was scheduled to be promulgated into law on January 1, 2013. During the year previous occupational health and safety laws still applied. The Ministry of Labor initiated a public-awareness campaign to inform the public about the new law.

The Ministry of Labor is charged with enforcing the minimum wage as well as work hours and did so effectively. It also enforced health and safety standards and in most cases followed up to ensure that management corrected problems cited. A group of 10 safety and health inspectors helped enforce regulations, and nine labor officers handled labor law violations. The ministry used routine inspections, accident investigations, and union membership surveys to prevent labor violations and ensure that wages and working conditions met national standards. Penalties used by the Ministry of Labor include fines, imprisonment, or a combination of the

two. However, the ministry reported that it has historically relied on education, consensus building, and moral persuasion rather than penalties to correct labor law violations. The ministry delivered presentations to workers to inform them of their labor rights and provided education and awareness workshops for employers.

The Labor Department's Health and Safety Inspection Unit conducted several routine annual inspections of government-operated corporations and manufacturing plants, with no serious problems noted. However, the construction, industrial, and hospitality sectors were mentioned as problem areas due to the frequency and severity of worksite accidents. Three people died in the course of their employment during the year, and there were six major industrial accidents.

In practice the prevailing wage on the island was higher than the legal minimum wage. However, there were occasional press reports alleging that migrant workers received less than the minimum wage. Foreign workers in high-risk sectors such as domestic service, agriculture, or construction were sometimes not aware of their rights and protections under the law, and unions expressed concern that domestic workers were sometimes forced to work in unacceptable conditions.

The Ministry of Labor recently began collecting data about accidents involving violence in the workplace, and there were 17 reports of workplace violence during the year. Office environments also received additional attention from the ministry due to indoor air quality concerns. Trade union monitors identified safety problems for government health and safety inspectors to ensure the enforcement of safety and health regulations and effective correction by management.